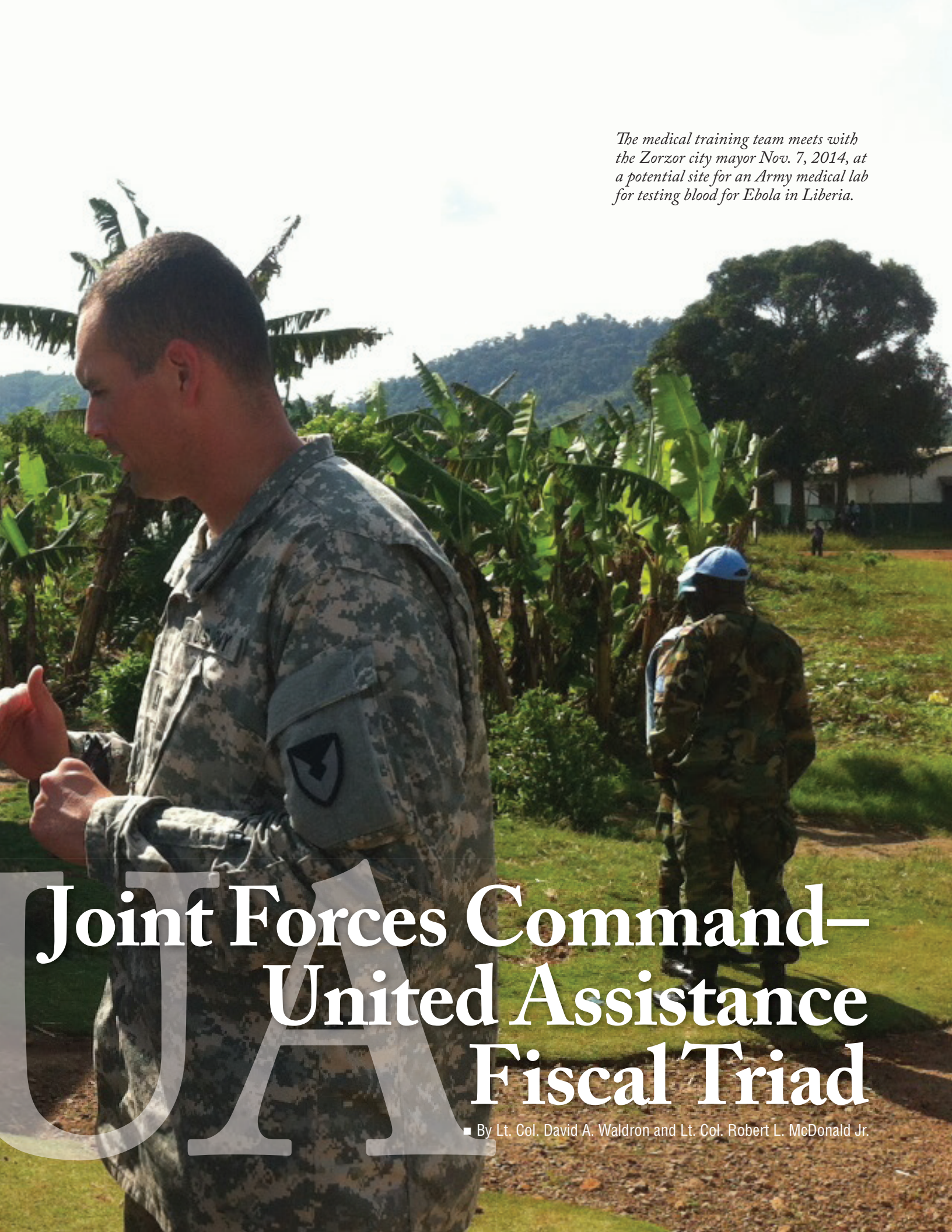




INTERVIEW



The medical training team meets with the Zorzor city mayor Nov. 7, 2014, at a potential site for an Army medical lab for testing blood for Ebola in Liberia.

Joint Forces Command— United Assistance Fiscal Triad

■ By Lt. Col. David A. Waldron and Lt. Col. Robert L. McDonald Jr.

FEATURES

Excellent financial planning and execution enabled Operation United Assistance to complete its mission under budget.

In September 2014, the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) headquarters was alerted for immediate deployment to West Africa to support Operation United Assistance (OUA). As the newly established Joint Forces Command–United Assistance (JFC–UA), the 101st was to provide support to the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) in its efforts to prevent the spread of the Ebola virus disease.

The 101st Airborne Division G–8, the 922nd Contracting Battalion (CBN), and C Detachment, 101st Financial Management Support Unit (C/101st FMSU) all deployed from Fort Campbell, Kentucky, to resource OUA. This “fiscal triad” of resource management, contingency contracting, and financial operations units funded, procured, and disbursed more than \$116 million in requirements during the first four months of OUA.

With total expenditures of \$402.8 million, the cost of OUA was well below the initial U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) cost estimate of \$750 million. OUA will be known as one of the few Department of Defense (DOD) operations to come in under budget, under the anticipated time, and with less manpower than initially requested.

Planning and Deployment

Since the fiscal triad components of the 101st G–8, the 922nd CBN, and C/101st FMSU were all stationed at Fort Campbell, they synchronized their OUA financial management (FM) and contingency contracting predeployment planning. This led to a quick start once all units arrived in Liberia.

The C/101st FMSU planned and prepared for OUA in less than three weeks. In garrison, C/101st FMSU was operationally committed to the Fort Campbell Defense Military Pay Office, so it lacked disbursing and commercial vendor services (CVS) expertise. To alleviate this deficiency, C/101st FMSU attended Defense

Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS)–Indianapolis Operational Support Team training.

DFAS nominated the 106th FMSU, 16th Special Troops Battalion, 16th Sustainment Brigade, in Baumholder, Germany, to support OUA. The finance concept of support called for half the detachment to perform the disbursing mission and the other half to provide customer services, answer military pay inquiries, and provide storefront CVS support via cash payments and electronic funds transfers (EFTs).

En route to Liberia, the 101st G–8 met with the U.S. Army Africa (US-ARAF) G–8 in Vicenza, Italy, and the AFRICOM J–8 in Stuttgart, Germany, in order to develop responsive and auditable funding processes. The C/101st FMSU stopped in Baumholder, Germany, to receive validation training and certification by the 106th FMSU command disbursing and CVS sections.

However, this training delayed the arrival of key finance assets in Liberia. In the future, the training and certification should be coordinated with the servicing theater FM center and completed at home station before deployment, if practical.

The 922nd CBN reached out to the 414th Contracting Support Brigade (CSB) in Vicenza to synchronize contingency contracting policy and procedures. This allowed the 922nd CBN command team to determine the division of labor and any additional training that would be required before deploying.

The Logistics Civil Augmentation Program (LOGCAP) office sent a small team to train the 922nd on LOGCAP, which was already established in Africa. The 414th CSB deployed a contingency contracting team and representatives from its contracting support plans and operations cell to Liberia. They provided contracting support for the initial mission and basic living requirements until the 101st headquarters and the 922nd CBN assumed JFC–UA operations.

After arriving at the Barclay Training Center in Monrovia, the JFC-UA J-8, the C/101st FMSU, and the 922nd CBN were co-located, which enabled a shared understanding of the fiscal common operational picture.

Funding

The Defense Security Cooperation Agency, DOD's lead for security cooperation programs including foreign humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (FHA/DR), allocated overseas humanitarian, disaster, and civic aid (OHDACA) funding to AFRICOM. AFRICOM further allocated funding to commands supporting OUA, such as USARAF.

The intended purpose for OHDACA funds is to support humanitarian assistance operations, relieve indigenous population suffering following a specific disaster, and generate long-term positive perceptions of the DOD.

OUA did not have mature funding processes, procedures, or relationships like those that U.S. Army Central had established for operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. AFRICOM did not have a dedicated funds center in the General Fund Enterprise Business System (GFEBS) to execute OHDACA funds. Therefore, the JFC had to rely on a command with a funds center to execute OHDACA in GFEBS.

Continental United States-based Army divisions do not typically work with an Army service component command (ASCC) for funding, so the 101st G-8 had to establish a relationship with USARAF to obligate funds using GFEBS work breakdown structures. This partnership was highly effective and enabled the small 101st G-8 section to reach back to USARAF for budget and accounting assistance.

G-8 Operations

In September 2014, USARAF deployed a G-8 officer with its forward command team who sent validated requirements back to the USARAF

G-8 in Italy for funding in GFEBS. This process worked and proved that USARAF could execute funding on the JFC's behalf. The 101st G-8 section deployed its noncommissioned officer-in-charge early in the force flow, and he successfully executed a GFEBS financial transaction in Liberia, proving that GFEBS could be used.

Being able to reach back to the USARAF G-8 was critical to maintaining continuity between commands in case the JFC was replaced or if communications failed. The 101st G-8 co-located the deputy G-8 and a noncommissioned officer with GFEBS experience with USARAF G-8 as liaison officers. After validation training and verifying GFEBS roles, the USARAF G-8 delegated to the JFC J-8 full funds certification authority to execute OHDACA for JFC-UA requirements.

After all six 101st G-8 personnel deployed, the JFC had its own team to fund valid requirements, submit status of funds reports, and request funds from AFRICOM. Although a funding and budget execution structure of this nature had never been used by a division in Africa before, it was highly successful.

The USARAF G-8 representative in Liberia established a relationship with the Defense Attaché Office in the U.S. Embassy to fund basic living requirements using fund cite letters for rental vehicles, fuel, lodging, administration, Internet, and security services.

The JFC-UA J-8 further defined roles and responsibilities, developed a detailed ledger, and synchronized requirements with the JFC validation process to capture costs and properly authorize obligation of funds. This relationship with the embassy proved to be a very efficient way to procure and pay the Department of State and local-national vendors for services.

C/101st FMSU Operations

The C/101st FMSU faced several unique challenges in West Africa. Fortunately, Liberians use the U.S.

dollar in addition to their own currency. Most CVS payments to larger vendors were paid via EFTs, but the smaller local vendors required cash because some did not understand how EFTs worked and a few did not have bank accounts.

Bank fraud was too great a risk in West Africa, so C/101st FMSU never established a limited depository account. The detachment secured coins for postal operations and direct-exchanged currency with the custodian of postal effects—two unexpected requirements.

Despite the presence of 14 automated teller machines in Monrovia, C/101st FMSU disbursed more than \$360,000 in casual pay to Soldiers for cash to spend at the U.S. Embassy or a vetted local market. The JFC did not request Army and Air Force Exchange Service or Eagle-Cash stored-value cards because of the assumed short duration of the deployment and the requirements to set them up.

922nd CBN Operations

The 922nd CBN established the regional contracting center to provide mission command for regional contracting offices in Liberia and Senegal. The battalion commander chaired the joint contracting support board, which determined how to source requirements that were vetted, prioritized, approved, and funded by JFC-UA, thus enabling the contracting team to award contracts.

Over the span of five months, the 922nd CBN and the 643rd and 718th Contracting Teams awarded more than 200 contracts, valued at over \$93 million, in support of the validated requirements. The 922nd CBN administered LOGCAP with associated contracts valued at over \$75 million.

The LOGCAP task order provided for basic living requirements using Force Provider camps for over 2,500 JFC-UA service members and built six Ebola treatment units in Liberia. Leveraging LOGCAP precluded the deployment of hundreds of addition-

al U.S. military personnel and their equipment.

Commercial Shipping

Demands to ship test, measurement, and diagnostic equipment, Army Oil Analysis Program samples, and critical communications parts in need of repair came immediately, but no system was in place to commer-

cially ship the equipment. sources: USAID's mission tasking matrix requirements and the JFC's life support requirements. After receiving a mission tasking matrix from USAID's disaster assistance response team, the JFC determined how best to execute the mission.

Since the infrastructure in Liberia could not support OUA, the Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) pro-

cused on the JFC commander's and USAID's priorities.

FM Handbook

To alleviate commanders' fears about deploying to an austere environment with unfamiliar financial resources, the JFC-UA J-8 published the OUA FM handbook. The procedures in the handbook were the result of lessons learned and communication with higher headquarters, supported units and legal, contracting, and FM professionals.

JFC-UA commanders and financial managers used the FM handbook for guidance on OHDACA funding. It was modeled on the well-known Commander's Guide to Money as a Weapon System Handbook used in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The OUA FM handbook served as a how-to guide with the intent of making all OUA financial processes repeatable from one headquarters to the next, assuming Ebola containment efforts would last for a long time or have to be restarted. It described standard processes including committing funds in GFEBS, paying contracts and commercial shipping, facilitating supply requisitions, and funding emergency leave.

The handbook's legacy rests with its application to ASCCs and JFCs or joint task forces that can replicate OUA FM procedures in other contingency deployments. The procedures captured in the handbook will be incorporated in the Army Finance School programs of instruction. Most importantly, future units can deploy with the lessons learned found in the handbook and immediately begin resourcing their commander's priorities without having to reinvent processes.

Lessons Learned

The following are the JFC-UA's recommendations for the next JFC or joint task force preparing for deployment.

1. Include resource management, finance support, contingency contracting, and staff judge advocate

The JRRB process saved millions of dollars by ascertaining what requirements clearly helped USAID and the government of Liberia fight Ebola.

cially ship the equipment.

The JFC-UA J-8 contacted the DHL warfighter support team and established a dedicated account with local DHL offices to ship items without paying cash for each requirement. The DHL account provided cost savings in the form of dedicated DOD shipping rates, which avoided taxes and tariffs.

The JFC-UA J-4 and J-8 validated every shipping requirement to ensure the local DHL office shipped only JFC-approved items. Each shipment required authorization through a signed memorandum affixed to an invoice provided by the requester. The DHL process increased awareness of shipping costs, removed the need for cash, and served as a cost effective and transferable process to ship critical items.

JRRB

In order to ensure that JFC-UA units were good stewards of appropriated funds, the JFC-UA commander instituted multiple cost-saving measures to track how OHDACA funds were being spent. Two measures included the JFC-UA joint requirements review board (JRRB) and publication of the JFC-UA OUA FM Handbook.

OUA requirements came from two

provided many commodities to enable the construction of JFC living areas and Ebola treatment units. When DLA did not have the materials on hand, the JFC needed a means to procure the required items. The first step in requesting support was to submit documentation to the JFC's JRRB.

To validate requirements below the AFRICOM threshold of \$10 million, the JFC conducted a JRRB three times a week, led by the deputy commanding general. The JRRB was the only JFC venue for validating requirements and approving funding, enabling centralized and focused scrutiny of OHDACA expenditures.

Board members included the J-3 operations officer, J-4 logistics officer, engineer, staff judge advocate, 922nd CBN commander, and the J-8 comptroller. Each member brought subject matter expertise to determine if a requirement was valid, executable, and legal. Any project that did not meet OHDACA's humanitarian assistance requirements or aid the Ebola effort was not funded.

JFC units could not use OHDACA frivolously on living requirements because the board enforced strict spending guidelines. Most importantly, the JRRB kept all units fo-

personnel with the advance party. Their expertise is needed to fund, contract, and pay for host-nation support quickly and responsibly.

Co-locate this team in the JFC headquarters in order to act on and fund requirements quickly based on a shared understanding of the fiscal common operational picture. The triad walked projects from initial procurement action through funding, disbursing, and contract closeout, greatly reducing issues in the Standard Procurement System and unmatched transactions in GFEBS.

2. Ensure the early-entry J-6 establishes Internet connectivity and enables .mil access. This is critical for the J-8 financial managers to commit funds and generate reports in GFEBS.

3. Conduct a structured JRRB led by a JFC senior leader in order to keep OHDACA expenditures to a minimum. Having a routine board validate all requirements forced everyone to scrutinize requirements and ensured that the JFC was focused more on Ebola containment than on spending on its own living requirements.

4. Fight to retain the JFC commander's authority to approve all requirements up to \$10 million. Most JFC-UA requirements fell below this threshold, which provided maximum flexibility for the commander to reallocate manpower and assets to support USAID.

5. Use ASCC staff for reach-back support. USARAF's support during the first 30 days of OUA was critical to ensuring a successful transition to an enduring JFC. As systems within the forward deployed FM section are established, the reliance on the ASCC can be lessened. The ASCC can be relied on for financial transactions in systems like GFEBS in case connectivity degrades.

6. Quickly publish FM guidance so units understand the operation's funding and contingency contracting processes. Guidance is critical when dealing with an unfamiliar appropri-

ations like OHDACA.

7. Establish an operational contract support integration cell (OCSIC) at the brigade or higher level before deploying, and exercise it by processing garrison contracts. The OCSIC was instrumental in collecting unit requirements and preparing for the JRRB. However, it could have been resourced better.

The JFC-UA OCSIC was manned by a major and a sergeant first class. With at least one more person and more collective training, this team could have better prepared units by providing constructive criticism for their packets prior to the JRRB.

The OCSIC maintains the requirements database, which should be the single source to answer internal and external requisitions. To maximize its usefulness, this database needs to be synchronized at least weekly with the J-8's funding data and status of contracts.

8. Use Intelink.gov to maintain transparency of the JFC's requirements, JRRB results, status of funds, and standard operating procedures. This unclassified venue enabled higher headquarters to maintain situational awareness of funding and command-interest items like vehicle and property leases and communications equipment purchases.

9. FMSUs need to train their detachments for short-notice deployments where they will conduct disbursing operations, especially EFT and cash-based operations. Train with the DFAS-Indianapolis CVS operational support team.

10. Ensure the CBN trains field ordering officers, and the FMSU trains pay agents at home station before deployment. Have these micropurchase teams trained and ready to deploy once deployment requirements are known. Select high-performing Soldiers for these duties. Overseeing quality results in better contracting outcomes and best value to the U.S. government.

11. Contracting units must develop early lines of communication with the U.S. Embassy in the host

nation. Embassies maintain vendor lists that provide an immediate network to facilitate expeditious contracting solutions.

The 101st Airborne Division headquarters and the Fort Campbell "fiscal triad" that supported JFC-UA sought out solutions to initial problems, reached out to subject matter experts, and fully resourced the JFC commander's priorities with no operational delays caused by funding, contracting, or a lack of disbursing support.

The triad quickly learned how to use OHDACA funding and applied it smartly. JFC-UA task forces accomplished all USAID-tasks missions, which led to the decline of Ebola in Liberia.

The JFC-UA fiscal triad was critical to the accomplishment of the OUA mission. The JFC took stringent measures to remain cost conscious. Upon completion, the cost of OUA was 57 percent of the initial estimated amount. More than 1,500 healthcare workers were trained, and four Army mobile labs supported the 10 Ebola treatment units that JFC-UA had built, contracted for, and monitored.

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